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ABSTRACT

This issue of the serial "Juvenile Justice" is devoted to the theme of female juvenile defenders and contains three articles on this subject. The lead article, "Investing in Girls: A 21st Century Strategy," by Leslie Acoca, stresses that addressing the needs of adolescent girls, who make up the fastest growing segment of the juvenile justice system, offers the United States its best hope of halting the intergenerational cycle of family fragmentation and crime. "The Female Intervention Team," by Marian D. Daniel, describes the Female Intervention Team developed by the Maryland Department of Juvenile Justice to help young women who have lost a sense of direction. "National Girls' Caucus," by LaWanda Ravoira, describes this coalition through which advocates for increased national attention to the special needs of females in the juvenile justice system collaborate. (SLD)

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Volume VI • Number 1

ED 437 463

JUVENILE

Investing in Girls: A 21st Century Strategy

The Female Intervention Team
National Girls' Caucus

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Journal of the
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From the Administrator

A troubling trend of the past decade has been the increasing involvement of female offenders in the juvenile justice system. Between 1992 and 1996 alone, the number of female juveniles arrested for violent crimes increased 25 percent. This increase is even more noteworthy in view of the fact that arrests of male juveniles for the same offenses in the same period did not increase at all.

We must expand our knowledge and our understanding of the factors that contribute to female juvenile offending and those that guard against it. In particular, we must invest in girls to promote public safety. As **Leslie Acoca** illustrates in our lead article, "Investing in Girls" will pay dividends well into the 21st century.

"The Female Intervention Team" (FIT), described by its founder and Director **Marian Daniel**, is one initiative already paying such dividends. Since 1992, this gender-specific probation program has worked to restore hope to female offenders through diverse services that address their unique needs.

Fortunately, FIT is only one of a number of initiatives taking up the challenge of investing in young women. I am encouraged by **LaWanda Ravoira**'s report about the "National Girls' Caucus," through which advocates for increased national attention to the special needs of females in the juvenile justice system collaborate to spread their message and join their efforts.

It is just such teamwork that offers hope for our future—and our children's.

Shay Bilchik
Administrator
Office of Juvenile Justice
and Delinquency Prevention

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JUVENILE JUSTICE

Volume VI • Number 1 October 1999

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Victimization is consistently identified as the first step along a girl's pathway into the juvenile justice system. Addressing the needs of adolescent girls, who now make up the fastest growing segment of the juvenile justice system, offers the Nation its best hope of halting the intergenerational cycle of family fragmentation and crime.

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Investing in Girls: A 21st Century Strategy

by Leslie Acoca

As Americans look back over the 20th century, the increasing criminalization of girls and women and the realization that they now make up the fastest growing segments of the juvenile and criminal justice systems must spark a major public response. Further, as a comprehensive national strategy to promote public safety into the 21st century is developed, the youngest and least visible female offenders—adolescent girls—and their children must be a core focus. Given the developmental and childbearing potential of these young women and the generally low risk they pose to their communities, addressing their needs offers the Nation its best hope of halting the intergenerational cycle of family fragmentation and crime.

Any effort to understand and develop strategies to reverse the accelerating entry of girls into the juvenile justice system must begin with an examination of the current statistical picture. Between 1993 and 1997, increases in arrests were greater (or decreases smaller) for girls than for boys in almost every offense category (Snyder, in press). The 748,000 arrests of girls younger than 18 years old in 1997 represent 26 percent of all juvenile arrests made that year. This proportion has been climbing slowly since 1986 when girls constituted 22 percent of all juvenile arrests (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1998).

Buttressing claims that girls are beginning to catch up with boys in terms of their involvement with more serious and violent crimes, the Violent Crime Index arrest rate for girls rose 103 percent between 1981 and 1997, compared with a 27 percent increase for boys during the same time period. In assessing this disproportionate rise, however, one should keep in mind that the arrest rate for juvenile males for these crimes remains five times that for females (Snyder, in press).

It should also be noted that the greatest increases in arrests of girls between 1993 and 1997 were for drug abuse and curfew violations (Snyder, in press). The escalating number of girls arrested for drug-related offenses should be of particular concern as should the results of a 1998 survey indicating that substance use and abuse among adolescent girls in the general population are rising (Drug Strategies, 1998). Other studies indicate that the unprecedented increase in the number of incarcerated adult women since the early 1980's has largely been due to drug-related offending (Mauer and Huling, 1995).

Leslie Acoca, M.A., M.F.C.C., Director of the Women and Girls Institute, National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD), has served as Principal Investigator on two major studies profiling girls in the juvenile justice system. The Institute conducts research and develops programs and training curriculums that reduce the entry and reentry of young women and women into the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

There have also been greater increases in the number of delinquency cases involving young women handled by juvenile courts than in those pertaining to young men. Between 1986 and 1995, the number of delinquency cases involving girls increased 68 percent, compared with a 40-percent increase in those involving boys (Sickmund, 1997). Further, paralleling the changes evident in arrest statistics, "the relatively greater increase in cases involving females was due to changes in person offense cases (up 146% for females versus 87% for males) and property offense cases (up 50% among females compared with 17% among males)" (Sickmund, 1997:3).

Are girls traditionally drawn into the juvenile justice system for less serious crimes than their male counterparts?

On the surface, these broad national data seem to indicate dramatic increases in the proportion and seriousness of delinquent acts committed by girls. However, the reality underlying the statistics is hotly disputed by researchers and policymakers. Are girls becoming more violent, or are recent trends partially an artifact of girls' lower base rate of arrests and delinquency cases since the 1970's (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1998)? What influences do changing and often less tolerant family and societal attitudes toward girls, shifts in law enforcement practices (particularly toward gangs), and the increasing availability of weaponry exert on girls' offending? And finally, are girls traditionally drawn into the juvenile justice system for less serious crimes than their male counterparts?

What is beyond dispute is the need to construct a blueprint for a comprehensive continuum of gender-responsive prevention, intervention, and graduated sanctions services that can be tailored to meet the needs of diverse jurisdictions. Equally clear is the requirement that any such blueprint have as its foundation a research-based profile of the characteristics, needs, and life circumstances of girls at risk of entering the juvenile justice system and those already involved with the system. External barriers such as the paucity of programs specifically designed for girls and the anticipated impact of new Federal welfare and adoption legislation on adolescent mothers and their children should also be taken into account. Addressing these issues can no longer be an afterthought. Specific Federal, State, and local legislative and organizational remedies must be sought.

Characteristics of Girls At Risk of Entering or Involved With the Juvenile Justice System

To address many of the challenges noted above, in 1998, the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) conducted a multidimensional study of girls in the California juvenile justice system (Acoca and Dedel, 1998). To obtain an official perspective on female offenders, NCCD accessed juvenile justice system databases and conducted an indepth review of nearly 1,000 case files from multiple points within the probation systems of four California counties. In an effort to delve beneath the surface of statistical and official profiles and obtain the girls' description of their characteristics and needs, NCCD interviewed nearly 200 girls in county juvenile halls. The following study findings confirm the results from much of the research that has been conducted over the past 25 years by

pioneers such as professors Meda Chesney-Lind, Joanne Belknap, and others. The findings also offer additional information that supports the need to reach girls early with intensive intervention and services before they reach the breaking point—that point in early adolescence when so much can go wrong in the lives of girls.

Victimization and Girls' Pathways to Offending

Leading academics who have examined the constellation of life circumstances typically shared by adult and juvenile female offenders have posited that they follow a unique route into the justice system. According to Belknap and Holsinger, "The most significantly and potentially useful criminological research in recent years has been the recognition of girls' and women's pathways to offending" (Belknap and Holsinger, 1998:1). These and other scholars have consistently identified victimization—physical, sexual, and emotional—as the first step along females' pathways into the juvenile and criminal justice systems and as a primary determinant of the types and patterns of offenses typically committed by girls and women.

Key findings of the 1998 NCCD study of girls in the California juvenile justice system confirm the pathways approach and closely parallel the findings of a 1995 survey of 151 adult female State prisoners; this survey revealed that one of the most universally shared attributes of adult female prisoners was a history of violent victimization (Acoca and Austin, 1996). Ninety-two percent of the juvenile female offenders interviewed in 1998 reported that they had been subjected to some form of emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse (Acoca and Dedel, 1998). Despite their age, however, a higher number of the younger women interviewed reported that they had been physically abused, including 25 percent who reported that they had been shot or stabbed one or more times (Acoca and Dedel, 1998). Of critical importance to understanding why many women and girls begin to commit offenses are the early age at which they suffer abuse and the negative repercussions of this abuse on their lives.

Victimization—physical, sexual, and emotional—is the first step along females' pathways into the juvenile justice system.

The ages at which adolescent girls interviewed were reportedly most likely to be beaten, stabbed, shot, or raped were 13 and 14 (Acoca and Dedel, 1998). Not surprisingly, a high proportion of girls first enter the juvenile justice system as runaways, who often were seeking to escape abuse at home (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1998). In addition, 75 percent of young women interviewed reported regular use of drugs, including alcohol, which typically began at about age 14 (Acoca and Dedel, 1998:91).

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Many academics and practitioners agree (Covington, 1998) and NCCD data reveal that clear correlations exist between the victimization of women and girls and specific high-risk behaviors such as serious drug abuse (Acoca and Dedel, 1998). One reason for this close connection is the capacity of mood-altering chemicals to temporarily dull the psychological devastation wrought by experiences of physical and sexual violation. Tragically, statistical analysis of interview data revealed that both the experience of victimization and substance abuse correlated with multiple risky behaviors including truancy, unsafe sexual activity, and gang involvement (Acoca and Dedel, 1998).

Certain abuses follow girls into the juvenile justice system.

Many girls report and, in some instances, NCCD field researchers have observed that certain abuses follow girls into the juvenile justice system. Specific forms of abuse reportedly experienced by girls from the point of arrest through detention include the consistent use by staff of foul and demeaning language, inappropriate touching, pushing and hitting, isolation, and deprivation of clean clothing. Some strip searches of girls were conducted in the presence of male officers, underscoring the inherent problem of adult male staff supervising adolescent female detainees. Of special concern were the routine nature of these acts and the pervasive atmosphere of disrespect toward the girls that they reported permeates not just juvenile justice settings, but also other community institutions.

Family Fragmentation

The data reveal that the families and caretakers of these girls were subject to a wide range of stressors, including poverty, death, and an intergenerational pattern of arrest and incarceration.

According to their case files, more than 95 percent of the girls were assessed as lacking a stable home environment, and 11 percent had experienced or witnessed the death of one or both parents or a sibling. Many of the girls interviewed recalled moving back and forth between relatives while they were growing up or being placed in a foster or group home, typically between the ages of 12 and 14, through the child welfare or juvenile justice system.

More than one-half (54 percent) of the girls interviewed reported having mothers who had been arrested or incarcerated. By contrast, 46 percent of the girls' fathers had reportedly been locked up at some point, and 15 percent of the fathers were reportedly incarcerated at the time of the interview. Interviews with the girls indicated that some girls had little or no contact with their fathers, which could account for the lower reported percentage of incarcerated fathers.

Extending the theme of family fragmentation into the next generation, "an alarming 83 percent of the young women interviewed who were mothers reported that they had been separated from their infants within the first three months of their children's lives, a pivotal developmental stage" (Acoca and Dedel, 1998:11). Further, 54 percent of girls who were mothers had not had a single visit with their child or children while in detention or placement (Acoca and Dedel, 1998).

Academic Failure and Schools as a Battleground

Failing in school was almost as universal an experience as victimization in the lives of the girls interviewed. Ninety-one

percent of girls reported that they had experienced one or more of the following: being suspended or expelled, repeating one or more grades, and/or being placed in a special classroom. Eighty-five percent of girls had been expelled or suspended, and the median age for the first of these experiences was 13. Of girls placed in special classrooms, only 1 percent said that the placement helped them stay out of trouble. Finally, many girls described school as a battleground in which sexual harassment, racism, interpersonal rivalries with peers, and inattention from adult professionals made dropping out appear to be a necessary means of escape.

Health and Mental Health Issues

Eighty-eight percent of the girls interviewed for this study reported that they had experienced one or more serious physical health problems and more than half (53 percent) stated that they needed psychological services. Twenty-four percent said that they had seriously considered suicide, and 21 percent had been hospitalized in a psychiatric facility on at least one occasion.

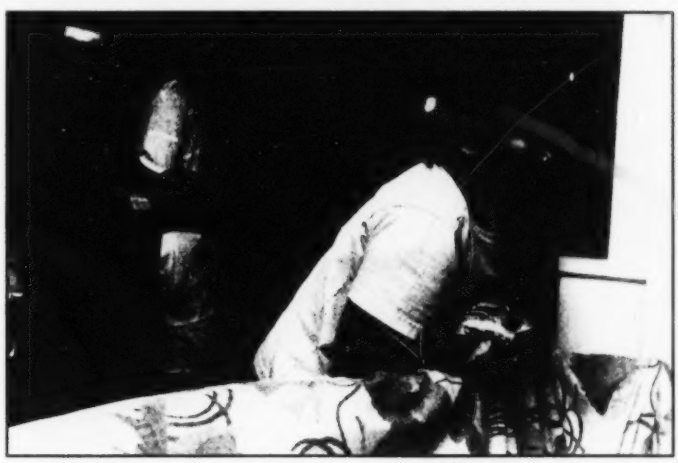
Twenty-nine percent of the girls interviewed had been pregnant one or more times and 16 percent had been pregnant while in custody. Of those girls who had been pregnant in custody, 23 percent had miscarried and 29 percent had been placed in physical restraints at some point, usually during transport.

Nonserious, Nonviolent Offense Patterns

Consistent with studies of the offense patterns of girls conducted since the 1970's, the majority of girls surveyed were charged with less serious offenses (e.g., property, drug, and status offenses) then violent offenses (e.g., murder, assault). The highest percentage (36 percent) of these girls were probation violators, many of whom reported that their first offense was running away, truancy, curfew violation, or some other status offense. Girls in Southern California reported that having a tattoo or wearing baggy clothes that could be perceived as markers of gang affiliation were sufficient to bring them into contact with law enforcement. Once they were placed on probation, any subsequent offense, even another status offense, became a violation of a valid court order and a vector for their greater involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Case files of girls revealed most assault charges to be the result of nonserious, mutual combat situations with parents.

Qualitative analysis of the circumstances surrounding the offenses of the relatively high percentage (34 percent) of girls reporting person offenses (including assault, robbery, homicide, and weapons offenses) revealed a disturbing picture. A majority of the girls' more serious charges fell into the assault category. A close reading of the case files of girls charged with assault revealed that most of these charges were



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the result of nonserious, mutual combat situations with parents. In many cases, the aggression was initiated by the adults. The following descriptions excerpted from case files are typical and telling: "Father lunged at her while she was calling the police about a domestic dispute. She (girl) hit him." "She (girl) was trying to sneak out of the house at night, but mom caught her and pushed her against the wall." In some instances, the probation reports describing the assaults indicate the incongruous nature of many of these incidents. In one case, a girl was arrested for throwing cookies at her mother.

The disparate treatment of minorities appears to be an important factor.

The small number of girls arrested for the most serious offenses—robbery, homicide, and weapons offenses—reportedly committed these crimes almost exclusively within the context of their relationships with codefendants. These relationships fell into two distinct categories: dependent or equal. The first group included girls who were following the lead of male offenders (often adults) who were typically the primary perpetrators of the crime. The second group included girls functioning in female-only groups or mixed-gender groups (including gangs) as equal partners in the commission of their offenses. Finally, the availability of weapons and an increased willingness to use them appeared to be factors in girls' involvement with serious and violent crime. Although the exact relationship between gang membership and more serious offenses committed by girls was not determined, nearly half of the girls interviewed (47 percent) reported gang affiliation, and 71 percent of these girls stated that they had been "very involved."

The disparate treatment of minorities appears to be an important factor in the processing of girls' cases. Nationally and in the NCCD sample, approximately two-thirds of the girls in the juvenile justice system are minorities, primarily African American and Hispanic. Statistical analysis of the NCCD interview data revealed a significant relationship between the girls' racial status and their drug use, history, and offense type. In summary, although whites reported the most drug use, compared with other racial groups, they were significantly more likely to also report that their most recent charge was a probation violation. By contrast, African Americans and Hispanics, despite significantly less drug involvement, were equally likely to report that their most recent charge was for a drug/property or person offense as they were to report a current probation violation.

The Breaking Point

NCCD interviews with girls in the juvenile justice system revealed a remarkable convergence of traumatic experiences and risky behaviors between the ages of 12 and 14. To recapitulate a few of these, the median age at which girls reported first becoming victims of sexual assault was 13 and the median age at which they were first shot or stabbed was 14. Thirteen was the age at which girls were most likely to report becoming sexually active and 14 was the median age at which they delivered their first child. In terms of risky behaviors, girls were most likely to begin using alcohol and other drugs, experience their first suspension or expulsion from school, run away from home, and not surprisingly, experience their first arrest at ages 13 and 14. All these events generally occur in communities in which virtually all institutions—families, schools, and public agencies, including juvenile justice—are failing girls.

The Paucity of Programs for Girls and the Impact of Recent Legislation

The paucity of services targeting female juvenile offenders is deepening the negative impact of the often traumatic life circumstances described above. Two 1998 national surveys of promising and effective gender-specific programs, one conducted by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and another as part of the 1998 NCCD study, indicate that there are only a relatively small number of such programs nationwide. Moreover, these programs (with a few notable exceptions such as PACE, Jacksonville, FL; the Female Intervention Team, Baltimore, MD; and Reaffirming Young Sister's Excellence (RYSE), Oakland, CA) are characteristically small and lack the organizational capacity and funding to collect, manage, and analyze client-related data. Particularly scarce are intensive family-based programs (residential, school, and in-home) that provide girl-specific health, psychiatric, substance abuse, and academic services tailored to girls' needs. Also lacking are programs that build and preserve the teen mother-child bond by providing specialized, developmentally sequenced interventions. Program elements that seldom appear are services that effectively address girls' diverse racial and cultural backgrounds and girls' innate strengths and resiliencies. Programs that specifically address at-risk girls in late childhood and preadolescence (8–11 years old) are also rare.

Further, recent Federal welfare legislation may reduce access to essential public benefits for low-income teen mothers and their children. Recent adoption legislation may simultaneously reduce the amount of time incarcerated teen mothers whose children are in foster care have to demonstrate their stability to family court in order to reunite with their children. In 1996, the U.S. Congress enacted the Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act, known to the public as welfare reform. This Federal legislation effectively ends the entitlement of poor children to ongoing needs-based support by placing strict limits on the amount of time such children may receive benefits (Wald, 1998). In addition to requiring that parents (overwhelmingly single mothers) hold jobs, it also places special restrictions on teen parents. Parents under age 18 who do not live with an adult or stay in school are denied benefits (Quigley, 1998). Naturally, this places special burdens on abused teens who might feel compelled to leave home because of abuse and on those who have dropped out of school because of learning or emotional disabilities.

Particularly scarce are intensive family-based programs tailored to girls' needs.

As female juvenile offenders are highly likely to have experienced both of these problems, they appear to be especially vulnerable. Although establishing paternity can benefit children, there is also concern among legal professionals that States that make receipt of benefits contingent on young women's cooperation in establishing their children's paternity may force pregnant and parenting teens into unwanted marriages (Hoke, 1998).

In addition, the 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act could further compound the difficulties faced by young female offenders who wish to regain care and custody of their children. Although the Act has the positive goal of protecting the safety and health of the child, it

places tighter limits than those imposed by previous legislation on the time and services available to parents (including incarcerated mothers) attempting to demonstrate their stability to the family court (Larsen, in press). Within 1 year, parents, including adolescent mothers whose children are under the care of the State, must meet all court-imposed requirements or permanently lose custody of their children. When applied to incarcerated women and girls, this could mean that thousands more children will be permanently removed from their mothers and in need of adoptive homes in the 21st century. Unwittingly, this well-intentioned act could potentially lead to establishment of a new, highly vulnerable orphan class of children.

21st Century Solutions

Reversing the factors underlying girls' accelerated entry into the juvenile justice system will require a highly organized approach including international, national, State, and local accords, legislation, and initiatives. A key focus of these must be a renewed commitment to eliminating violence toward girls outside and inside the juvenile justice system.

Girls in and on the edge of the juvenile justice system represent one of the least-served juvenile justice populations.

To this end, the United States should consider its level of compliance with international conventions and standards for the protection of children and ensure that its own legislation and policies match these standards (Amnesty International, 1998). In addition, the development and enforcement of Federal standards pertaining to conditions of confinement must specifically identify and respond to the needs of girls (Acoca and Dedel, 1998). To reduce violence toward women and girls in American society at large, Congress should continue to support the Violence Against Women Office and other Federal child-serving offices that provide programs and services to at-risk and delinquent girls.

Federal and State Partnerships

Representing an important partnership between the Federal Government and several States and local jurisdictions, OJJDP's Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders (Wilson and Howell, 1993) helps communities develop a working blueprint for measurably reducing youthful offending (Howell, 1995). Several local pilot sites, including Jacksonville, FL, and San Diego, CA, have completed their strategic plans (a process that involves a communitywide needs assessment). These sites have identified girls in and on the edge of the juvenile justice system as representing one of the least-served juvenile justice populations. As a natural extension of the Comprehensive Strategy, Jacksonville, FL, the home of the PACE program (which by rigorous standards has been identified as a highly effective school-based program for girls), is moving to profile its juvenile female population with research support from NCCD. Further, PACE is working with State and local public and private agencies that serve youth and with NCCD to help design and develop a comprehensive continuum of services for girls and their families, including their children. San Diego County has also extended its Comprehensive Strategy plan to provide specialized programs and services for girls and will receive technical assistance from NCCD while it develops

its programs. Based on its research-based profile of at-risk girls, the county has designed an intensive in-home component for girl offenders, which was recently funded by the California State Board of Corrections. Other jurisdictions receiving Federal support to develop a Comprehensive Strategy can now use these regions as prototypes for the design and implementation of girls' services.

Juvenile Justice Processing of Girls

At the State level, the California legislature passed SB 1657, the Juvenile Female Offender Intervention Program, in March 1998. This program would have allocated major funding to eligible counties to develop intervention programs designed to reduce juvenile crime committed by female offenders. Although the Governor of California failed to sign the bill, it may yet be resubmitted in California and used as a model for the development of similar legislation in other States. Other legislative strategies include key changes in the intake and processing of girls through the juvenile justice system (such as those mentioned below) and intensive development of gender-responsive services in every jurisdiction across the United States.[1]

The process of disproportionately detaining and sanctioning girls for status offenses and subsequent violations of valid court orders should be ended. OJJDP, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, members of law enforcement, and others should be directly enlisted in this effort. Effective diversion and intervention options that specifically address girls' needs and engage their families and caretakers should be developed at the community level. Family-focused programs that intervene in cases of family violence, including domestic combat between rebellious girls and their caretakers, should also be implemented at the community level.[2] Further, training that provides accurate information on the characteristics and needs of female juvenile offenders and their families and on dispositional alternatives for this population should be available to law enforcement, probation officers, juvenile and family court judges, and child welfare professionals. Such training should be required for all staff working directly with girls in youth correctional facilities.

Early Intervention for Preadolescent Girls

As indicated earlier, the continuum of programs and services required to reduce girls' entry into the juvenile justice system must be responsive not only to gender and age but to developmental stage. Although the 1998 NCCD study describes a model continuum providing developmentally appropriate services for girls between the ages of 5 and 18, the focus here is on 8- to 11-year-old girls—those at that crucial developmental stage for which there are few existing services. An optimum environment for at-risk girls of this age would be a community-based all-girls school setting that would anchor other services,

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including family counseling, substance abuse prevention, specialized educational services (such as learning disabilities assessment), and mentoring services.

Supporting the development of positive relationships between female offenders and their children is a critical strategy.

While the provision of an all-girls environment remains controversial, research conducted by Myrna and David Sadker (1994) of the American Association of University Women Educational Foundation (1997 and 1998) and the ongoing evaluation of the Florida PACE programs support this approach. The PACE program, which currently serves more than 2,500 12- to 18-year-old girls in 15 school-based centers statewide, recently committed to opening its first school-based program for 8- to 11-year-old girls. Once fully implemented and evaluated, this new program will yield invaluable information on the efficacy of educational and therapeutic services for preadolescent girls.

Preserving Family Ties

If a primary goal of the juvenile justice system is to protect public safety now and into the 21st century, supporting the development of positive relationships between juvenile and adult female offenders and their children is a critical long-term strategy. This can be achieved in part by ongoing evaluation of the aforementioned Federal welfare and adoption legislation and by funding, at least in part, the Family Unity Demonstration Project (Amnesty International, 1999). In 1998, Congress enacted the Family Unity Act and by doing so recognized the essential need for family strengthening programs linking incarcerated parents and their children. Although Congress has not appropriated the funds required for implementation, it could begin to address this need by funding one major demonstration program to preserve the bond between incarcerated mothers, their children, and families. On the threshold of the 21st century, it is imperative to recognize the close relationship between the needs of girls and women and public safety—a relationship based in part on the ability of future generations to remain crime free.

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Notes

1. See *Juvenile Female Offenders: A Status of the States Report* (Community Research Associates, 1998) for descriptions of State efforts to address gender issues.

2. See *Guiding Principles for Promising Female Programming: An Inventory of Best Practices* (Greene, Peters, & Associates, 1998) for examples of these programs.

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The Female Intervention Team

by Marian D. Daniel

In 1992, the Department of Juvenile Justice in Maryland developed a task force to assess the needs of female offenders in the juvenile justice system. The female population in Maryland at the time was growing, and State programming for females included little other than commitment to either short-term residential group homes or Maryland's one long-term secure residential program. The task force recommended that a gender-specific program be developed for girls in Baltimore City, which at the time was the largest jurisdiction in the State of Maryland. Thus, the Female Intervention Team (FIT) was born.

Baltimore started FIT in 1992, following an evaluation and assessment of girls in detention and secure commitment facilities by members of the task force. Because this community-based program for girls adjudicated delinquent by the court began without additional funding from Maryland's Department of Juvenile Justice, finding existing staff who were willing to be reassigned to supervise an all-female caseload was a considerable challenge.

Staff support was critical because the program required people committed to the idea of doing something different and unafraid of the unique challenges that supervising females presents.

Once staff willing to work with an all-female caseload were identified, the girls' cases were transferred into the unit and caseloads were reorganized. Because boys represented most of the cases being handled by those who volunteered, their cases also needed to be transferred to other staff. To accomplish this task, the FIT program director offered staff not working in the FIT unit the opportunity to transfer 1 girl's case for every 10 boys' cases they accepted. Within 3 weeks, the staff had transferred more than 300 girls to the FIT unit. At the time, there was little understanding of why case managers were uncomfortable working with female offenders. Was the problem the lack of resources for girls or the lack of knowledge about what drives girls to commit delinquent acts? In an informal survey, many case managers suggested that both factors were involved. Regardless of the reasons for their discomfort, staff made clear their perceptions of working with girls, as they were willing to take 10 boys in exchange for 1 girl.

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Team Makeup

The FIT team includes 13 juvenile counselors/case managers and 1 juvenile counselor supervisor. Ten of the case managers have an average caseload of 35 girls, which is low when compared with the average caseload of boys—approximately 50 or more. Two of the case managers provide investigations and reports on all new adjudicated cases, and one case manager is responsible for the organization and facilitation of FIT groups and programs, which provide the girls with specialized services and supportive atmospheres. In addition to the role of case manager and probation officer, each team member is responsible for managing a group or providing the backup for another case manager leading a group. As a team member, each case manager is also responsible for planning and organizing a monthly group activity that may be community or office based. The different ages of team members—and the combination of male and female case managers—contribute to a balanced team. Girls have an opportunity to see relationships between men and women that are neither sexual nor abusive.

Case managers need special traits to succeed in supervising an all-girl caseload. They must:

- Enjoy working with girls.
- Be willing to "go the extra mile."
- Have an open mind.
- Be comfortable with their own sexuality.
- Be nurturers.
- Serve as role models.
- Be able to focus on the positive aspects of a girl's life.
- Provide a safe and supportive environment to assist in the healing process.

Profile of a Baltimore City Female Offender

The task force's assessment of the information gathered on girls in detention and secure confinement was striking. A large percentage of the girls had been physically or sexually abused. Ninety-five percent came from single-family homes, 14 percent were pregnant at the time of detention, 32 percent had current or past sexually transmitted diseases, and 32 percent had (or previously had) chronic health problems. The girls' offenses, however, were not as surprising. The number one offense was simple assault (Department of Juvenile Services, 1992). The assessment revealed that the typical Baltimore City female offender was—and continues to be—a 16-year-old African American from a single-parent family. Although staff did not understand all the problems associated with this population, they were most concerned with and aware of health problems.

Girls have an opportunity to see relationships between men and women that are neither sexual nor abusive.

The Female Offender's Needs

In early 1993, the unit began developing plans to meet these needs. The team of 10 case managers by then had supervised more than 400 girls from Baltimore. Staff had plenty of information and were beginning to understand and document the major issues facing the girls. Research suggested that effective programs for girls must meet several criteria in order to provide effective services. The Valentine Foundation, a charitable foundation that makes grants available to qualifying tax-exempt organizations, places emphasis on

several factors to be considered in developing programs and services for girls (Valentine Foundation and Women's Way, 1990), advising programs to do the following:

- Ask girls who they are, what their lives are like, and what they need.
- Allow girls to speak up and actively participate in the services they receive.
- Assist girls with their family relationships and help them deal with family issues.
- Assist girls in becoming grounded in some form of spirituality.
- Allow staff more time and opportunity for building trusting relationships with girls.
- Allow girls the safety and comfort of same-gender environments.
- Provide girls with mentors who reflect girls' lives and who model survival, growth, and change.
- Assist girls with childcare, transportation, and safe housing issues.

Training became a first and essential step in developing and providing productive services.

- Maintain a diverse staff who reflect the girls served.
- Weave a multicultural perspective through programming.
- Teach girls coping strategies to overcome domestic violence, physical and sexual abuse, and substance abuse.
- Understand that relationships are central to girls' lives. Assist girls in maintaining important connections without sacrificing themselves to their relationships.
- Connect girls with at least one capable and nonexploitive adult for an ongoing supportive relationship.
- Promote academic achievement and economic self-sufficiency for girls.

FIT Training

Focusing on the above criteria for gender-specific programming was helpful in the development of FIT. Training in how to meet the criteria became a first and essential step in developing and providing productive services. The second step was a request for additional staff to keep caseloads in the FIT unit at a manageable level. The unit also learned that any programs developed would have to provide services addressing the girls' immediate needs.

The first training for the case managers came from the Maryland Infant and Toddlers Program. The program designed a 1-day training seminar to help case managers recognize the developmental stages of infants and toddlers. The seminar also helped staff identify issues faced by pregnant and parenting teens. A 1992 Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) report stated: "A health record review of girls detained and committed to facilities

Female Intervention Team's Mission

The Female Intervention Team seeks to restore hope to young women who have lost their direction and focus and lack goals. It accomplishes this through a variety of programs and services designed specifically for the female offender.

showed a myriad of health problems and indicated that DJS must look at these girls not only as individual teenagers but also as mothers and potential mothers" (Department of Juvenile Services, 1992). Of the 313 girls in detention facilities and the secure committed unit between May 1991 and March 1992, 44 girls were pregnant and 43 were mothers. Additional training was made available to FIT case managers at no cost to the department.

Search for Resources and Assistance

Once training took place, FIT staff began to look for programs and services in the community that demonstrated both knowledge and background in working with girls. Their first contact was with the Baltimore Urban League, which had established programs designed to focus on self-esteem. FIT and Urban League staff conducted a series of informational sessions for girls who came to the office for weekly group meetings. Staff showed movies with messages about making choices, resolving conflicts, and getting along in the home and community. The group provided an opportunity for the girls to speak openly about issues in their lives—an opportunity they welcomed. The girls began bringing friends with them and also requested additional sessions away from the office, which gave them more activities to attend after school. Seeing the success with this technique, FIT contacted another city program. This group's focus responded to the need for information on sexually transmitted diseases and the growing incidence of teen pregnancy among the adolescent population.

The Baltimore City Health Department, which already had adolescent groups, was also willing to help. FIT staff gained expertise in gender-specific services for females while the girls benefited from the information provided by the Health Department and the Urban League. Again, the training and the groups were provided at no cost to the State.

In 1993, FIT requested technical assistance from OJJDP to determine how best to achieve the unit's desire for comprehensive planning. FIT was anxious to learn how to plan more appropriately for the girls. In May 1993, Community Research Associates (CRA) developed a survey, with the help of FIT, to capture the needs of the population (Community Research Associates, 1994). CRA recommended that the unit:

- Provide special educational testing to ensure that no gap in information between the school system and the Department of Juvenile Justice existed.
- Make special efforts to strengthen the girls' academic skills.
- Provide basic health information and make appropriate health referrals.
- Identify intensive treatment opportunities for girls who had experienced abuse.

The group provided an opportunity for the girls to speak openly about issues in their lives.

With assistance from the Maryland Disabilities Law Clinic, FIT began to identify appropriate methods to help parents request Annual Review and Dismissals (ARD's) to obtain the necessary special education testing for their daughters. Based on CRA's recommendations, FIT developed an afterschool tutorial program. Several older youth were willing to tutor the youth in the lower grades. Both groups benefited from the program.

Almost immediately after informational sessions conducted for the health group ended, a local physician notified FIT that she had received a 1-year grant to provide family planning services for adolescent girls and needed girls to participate. Again, FIT did not have to seek funding to provide critical services.

Parent orientation and support have become essential components of the FIT program.

FIT staff later contacted the Girl Scouts for assistance in delivering female-focused services. The Girl Scouts designed a group for FIT that became involved in arts and crafts, field trips to cultural and social events, and film reviews. FIT now has its own Girl Scout troop, which was started with help from Scout leaders. When it began in 1993, the troop had 20 girls participating in the group every week and now averages about 12 to 15 girls per group. The Girl Scout troop is among the most popular groups at FIT. In addition to the staff facilitator, the troop uses student interns from local colleges who provide new and creative ideas to keep the group fresh.

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Parent orientation and support have become essential components of the FIT program. Parents are invited to participate in a parent support group developed at the request of parents who did not know what to do when their daughters were having problems. Because most of the girls in the program are from single-parent homes, many parents want and need some assistance. Often, they were teen parents themselves and do not want their daughters to make the same mistakes they made. This is especially true for single-parent fathers, who are often not sure what to do to meet their daughters' needs and who feel they need a female perspective. Parents who participate often appreciate the opportunity to receive and share information about "what works." Because many girls reside with grandparents, they too are encouraged to participate in the parent groups.

FIT Groups and Programs

The groups have continued to evolve. Staff have remained flexible and have developed groups to meet the ongoing needs of clients involved in the juvenile justice system. In addition to the groups described above, the following FIT programs are ongoing:

◆ **Academic Career Enrichment.** This career enrichment program, which was developed by a college intern who later became a staff member, teaches girls that there are a broad range of career options available to them. Women are invited to speak at the group's monthly sessions about both traditional and nontraditional careers. Girls are taught how to dress to be successful, how to complete job applications and write résumés, and how to prepare for employment interviews. They also learn the important difference between a job and a career.

◆ **Computer and Emerging Technology.** This group was originally established to prepare girls for their GED or the SAT. Like the other groups, it has evolved into something more. For example, participants are currently learning to repair and build computers.

◆ **Rites of Passage.** This program is designed to help girls make a positive transition to womanhood. The celebration of womanhood with symbols, rituals, and spiritual and cultural awareness provides the major focus. Rites also introduce the girls to their ancestors and other women who paved the way for them. Rites of Passage ends with a graduation celebration. For some girls, this is their first encounter with success.

◆ **Pregnancy Prevention.** This program is designed to help girls understand their sexuality and to provide them with information they can use to make choices. The program uses simulated babies donated by a local foundation that mimic an infant's actions to help girls decide if they are ready to be parents. Often, teen mothers talk to the group about their difficulty in trying to attend school and working with little or no assistance from the babies' fathers.

◆ **Teen Parenting Group.** This group was developed at the request of teen parents who need help in parenting their children. The girls wanted to know how to nurture and how to become better parents. The relationship that girls form with the facilitator is beneficial, especially if the girls do not have supportive parents.

◆ **Substance Abuse Group.** This group is designed to provide education and to identify the dangers of drugs. Girls are given the opportunity to talk about the effects of drugs on the mind and body. The group is not intended for girls addicted to substances.

◆ **Conflict Resolution.** Many girls come into the system because of assault offenses. Thus, it is important that they learn new methods to deal with anger and conflict. Participation in this group is mandatory.

During the 1992 holiday season, staff from the Governor's office donated gifts for infants and toddlers. Gifts included a children's table and chair set for the unit so that children of the girls who came to the office would have a place to play or sit and listen to stories. The Governor's staff also donated books and toys to be given to the girls who needed them. The atmosphere in the office has continued to make it a place to which girls can bring their children when they have appointments with their case managers. It is not unusual to see babies playing or being read to while their mothers participate in one of the groups.

Conclusion

Remaining flexible is helpful in developing a gender-specific program. To create a program that meets the needs of an all-female population, it is necessary to:

◆ Select staff willing to work with females.

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- Select staff willing to develop a team.
- Develop a profile of the girls in the program.
- Understand the needs of the female population.
- Locate community resources that focus on female issues.
- Secure interns from local colleges and universities.
- Provide an office setting that the girls will feel comfortable visiting.

Two years after FIT began, 50 percent fewer females were committed to Maryland's secure commitment facility.

According to FIT records, 2 years after FIT began, 50 percent fewer females from Baltimore City were committed to Maryland's secure commitment facility. The next year, the decrease was 95 percent. Administrators for the department did not understand why there was such a dramatic change in the commitment rate after just 2 years of providing gender-specific services. The explanation, however, was easy: FIT was not recommending secure commitment because the girls were not committing offenses that warranted secure commitment. Rather, they were running away from home or committing simple assaults and property offenses. In 1994 and 1995, no girls from Baltimore City were committed to the secure facility. In 1996, two girls were committed, each with very serious offenses. Case managers remain very involved with the girls' families.

The team concept has been the key ingredient that has made FIT successful. Staff work together, have lunch together, discuss difficult cases, and develop solutions as a team. Parents and girls know that if their case manager is out of the office, another case manager familiar with their case will see and talk to them. Each case manager is familiar with cases that require special attention. Working together is the key to developing the best programs and services and providing them to clients.

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National Girls' Caucus

by LaWanda Ravoira

Never underestimate the power of a small group of individuals to create change, for indeed it is the only thing that ever has.

—Margaret Mead

The National Girls' Caucus, an advocacy group initiated by PACE (Practical, Academic, Cultural Education) Center for Girls, Inc., focuses national attention on the unique needs of girls involved with the juvenile justice system. Although discussion regarding juvenile justice reform continues to take place at national, State, and local levels, at-risk girls continue to be misunderstood and underserved. Advocates continue to fight to save our youth from the negative influences that reach far beyond the concerns of earlier generations of adolescents. The warning signs that should call adults to action on behalf of at-risk girls are clear and compelling, yet services for girls are severely lacking in most communities. Following are some sobering statistics that show what life is like for many teenage girls today:

- Homicide is the third leading cause of death for African American girls (ages 5 to 14), the leading cause of death for African American women (ages 15 to 24), the fourth leading cause of death for white girls, and the second leading cause of death for young white women. For all other races/ethnic groups, homicide is the fourth leading cause of death for girls and the second leading cause of death for young women (Anderson, Kochanek, and Murphy, 1997).
- Girls are sexually abused almost three times more often than boys (Sedlak and Broadhurst, 1996).
- Victims of rape are disproportionately children and adolescent girls. In a report from the Center for Women Policy Studies, two-thirds of the convicted rapists surveyed stated that their victims were younger than 18, and the vast majority reported that they knew their victims (Tucker and Wolfe, 1997).
- Each year, nearly 1 million teenagers in the United States—approximately 10 percent of all 15- to 19-year-old females—become pregnant (Maynard, 1996).
- Eating disorders are more prevalent among girls. Eighty percent of high school girls report unsafe dieting practices in an attempt to reach an ideal body image portrayed by the media (Pipher, 1994).

Gender-Specific Programming

Because of the many problems that impact the daily lives of at-risk girls,

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national, State, and local policymakers should ensure that services are available to effectively address their changing needs. The problems normally associated with adolescence are exacerbated for girls in crisis. As the above data illustrate, girls present numerous issues including physical and sexual abuse by adults; conflicts at home and school; emotional problems; substance abuse; suicide attempts; problems associated with early sexual initiation, such as teen pregnancy, AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases; gang involvement; and low self-esteem. It is imperative that services be available to address these issues. The list below summarizes a sampling of societal problems confronting at-risk girls that warrant special attention by service providers:

Females are at least three times more likely than males to be victims of family violence.

◆ **Violence.** The death of a parent, uncle, brother, grandparent, neighbor, or close friend is not uncommon among at-risk girls. Helping these girls cope with death and loss (especially loss due to violence) requires specialized skills in grief counseling.

◆ **Sexual and physical abuse.** Many at-risk girls have experienced abuse. In a Commonwealth Fund Survey, 21 percent of the high school girls surveyed reported past physical or sexual abuse. The majority of the abuse occurred at home (53 percent) and more than once (65 percent). Twenty-nine percent of those abused did not tell anyone and 46 percent had depressive symptoms, more than twice the rate of girls who reported no abuse (18 percent). Abused girls also are at double the risk for signs of eating disorders (The Commonwealth Fund, 1997).

◆ **Domestic violence.** Females are at least three times more likely than males to be victims of family violence (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1993).

◆ **High-risk sexual behaviors.** Because at-risk girls have not had appropriate role models and the opportunity to learn the difference between love and sex, they often equate sexual relationships with love and caring. As a result, they make dangerous choices to engage in high-risk sexual behaviors that can lead to pregnancy, HIV, and sexually transmitted diseases.

◆ **Incarceration of close family members.** Girls in need are often the daughters of parents who are incarcerated. Separation from nurturing adults creates a long-term sense of isolation and fear.

◆ **Gang involvement.** A significant number of girls are becoming involved in gangs. Factors that motivate girls to join include abuse inflicted by parents

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and other relatives, poverty, and the failure of schools and other institutions to recognize risk factors early (Molidor, 1996). Gang membership threatens the girls and the agency staff who are seeking to provide help. Working with young women who are torn between fear of and loyalty to gangs and a desire to leave presents special challenges to staff and the community.

◆ **Alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.** Girls are closing the gender gap with their male counterparts in the use of substances. The motivation for using these substances is clearly linked to gender-specific issues (e.g., body image, desire to escape the emotional pain of abuse, and peer pressure).

◆ **Adolescent girls and health.** Girls have unique health issues that warrant special attention and access to services. Girls often do not report medical concerns because of fear, lack of trust, and embarrassment.

Despite these trends and the alarming patterns of self-destructive behaviors that girls are exhibiting, little attention has been focused on the unique needs of girls, the obstacles they face, or the services they require. Programs designed to benefit women and girls are significantly underfunded. Currently, less than 5 percent of the philanthropic dollars in the United States are specifically designated for helping women (Nokomis Foundation, 1998; Valentine Foundation and Women's Way, 1990). Experienced service providers report that girls wait longer for services than boys, and local communities often lack gender-specific programming for girls in need. Girls are more likely than boys to be held in detention for status offenses such as running away from home, truancy, or other noncriminal offenses (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1997).

A Small Group Can Create Change

In response to the lack of services for girls in the justice system, the National Girls' Caucus convened its first meeting in March 1993, in Washington, DC, with funding provided by the Valentine Foundation. Gathered together for the first time were child advocates, policymakers, national authorities on gender issues, service providers, educators, legislators, judges, funders, religious leaders, parents, and girls. Participants came together for two common purposes: to address the lack of services for girls in the justice system and to unite forces to ensure gender equity for young women involved in the justice system. The participants soon learned the power of a small group united for a common purpose.

In response to the lack of services, the National Girls' Caucus was formed to ensure equitable treatment.

Roundtables, Workshops, and Retreats

The first National Girls' Caucus Roundtable was held in Orlando, FL, in October 1994. At the roundtable, 100 concerned citizens learned about several nationally recognized residential and nonresidential prevention, intervention, and treatment programs for girls. Experts led interactive workshops with adults and girls to address the pressing concerns of inadequate access to healthcare, the need for a continuum of services for girls and young women, and the impact of violence in the lives of girls. Interest in the caucus grew from 100 individuals to 1,000 individuals and agencies across the Nation.

Individuals who felt isolated in their communities experienced the positive impact of networking with other individuals from various States who were grappling to address the needs of girls. Resources were freely shared and the group united with a common mission. Examples of the types of diverse resources shared with individuals and agencies around the country include the following:

◆ SISTA'S Womanhood Training, Inc., a 12-week curriculum utilizing workshops and seminars, includes topics such as banking and finance, HIV/AIDS and STD's, substance abuse to include fetal alcohol syndrome, health, nutrition, violence, and conflict resolution. Other topics include dating, pre- and postnatal care, etiquette, personal hygiene, respect, and values.

◆ The Female Intervention Team provides a gender-specific approach to treating young women who are adjudicated delinquent or are committed to the Baltimore, MD, juvenile justice system. A user-friendly staff training manual has been developed and shared with individuals and agencies around the country.

◆ St. Croix Girls Camp seeks to intervene in the lives of girls whose behavior and/or family situations necessitate temporary removal from the community. The camp assists girls in effectively communicating with adults and forming healthy interpersonal, peer, and family relationships.

◆ PACE Center for Girls, Inc., shares strategies for implementing gender-competent programming in any type of facility. The SMARTGIRLS! curriculum, which has been presented at and shared by the center, is one of the first curriculums to focus on the benefits of being young and female instead of focusing on the negative aspects. The goal is to help the girls gain a better understanding of the choices they can make to ensure a safe and successful future. PACE also provides fundraising and grant-writing resources and strategies.

In July 1995, a Strategic Planning Retreat was held in Orlando, FL, to determine the caucus' future direction. Participants adopted a mission statement to guide the caucus' work: focus national attention on the unique needs of girls and young women who are at risk or in the justice system in order to create change.

The caucus formed four working committees comprising members from around

Caucus Goals

◆ To impact public policy, resource allocation, and research in order to improve the quality of care and services for girls.

◆ To ensure culturally sensitive, gender-specific programming for girls and young women so they have the opportunity to lead healthy, productive, and safe lives.

◆ To ensure fairness in the justice system by eliminating gender, ethnic, and racial biases.

◆ To raise public awareness regarding the need for gender-appropriate programming and services for girls.

the country. Committee structure and assignments include the following:

◆ **Public Education/Public Relations Committee.** To create a market position and establish alliances within the justice system and with external organizations to promote the mission of the caucus.

◆ **Professional Education and Training Committee.** To provide the opportunity for professional training and development of members and the general public; market the gender equity model workshop; develop minimum standards for gender-competent programming; and sponsor annual conferences that focus on girls and young women in the justice system.

◆ **Public Policy Committee.** To cultivate supportive political relations at the national, State, and local levels to advocate for legislation that supports gender equity in the justice system.

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◆ **Program Committee.** To identify needs, solutions, innovative programs, and intervention strategies to address the needs of girls.

Youth facilitators talked about spiritual awareness, gang violence, sexual harassment, and cultural diversity.

Visions, Values, and Voices

The National Girls' Caucus has sponsored two major national conferences. The first, "Visions, Values, and Voices," was held in Fort Lauderdale, FL, in October 1996. More than 200 adults and students participated in this conference, which was sponsored by the Valentine Foundation. Shay Bilchik, Administrator, OJJDP, and former Secretary Calvin Ross, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, were featured keynote speakers. Model programs such as the Female Intervention Team, Baltimore, MD; SISTA'S, Washington, DC; City Girls, Chicago, IL; St. Croix Girls Camp, Sandstone, MN; and PACE Center for Girls, Inc., Jacksonville, FL, were highlighted. The most energizing track was the youth track, in which youth facilitators talked about topics such as spiritual awareness, gang violence, sexual harassment, and cultural diversity.

In September 1998, the second conference, "Beyond Visions, Values, and Voices," was held in Baltimore, MD. Its major objective was to provide reliable information regarding policymaking and funding as they relate to gender-specific programming. In addition, caucus board members have provided technical assistance to agencies across the Nation and

presented workshops on topics such as the core components of effective gender-specific programming, the realities of growing up female in today's culture, and personal and societal beliefs related to gender roles. Individuals who participate in caucus events have reported the implementation of local programs for girls such as the Reaffirming Young Sister's Excellence (RYSE) program in Alameda County, CA, which was created as a result of one woman's inspiration after attending a caucus roundtable. RYSE, staffed by specially trained probation officers, provides comprehensive services such as career readiness, anger management, pregnancy prevention, cultural activities, family preservation services, life skills, and transition programs to girls and young women served by the Alameda County Probation Department.

Through continued collaboration, the caucus will ensure that the voices of girls are heard.

Participants in caucus events also have reported the development of State coalitions, such as that found in the State of Michigan. After attending the 1996 caucus conference, representatives from Michigan spearheaded the State's first gender-specific seminar. They were awarded State funding to host a 1-day conference that raised awareness regarding the gender bias existing in the juvenile justice system. This conference drew more than 200 participants to include police officers, educators, juvenile court workers, judges, mental health workers, church representatives, and leaders of juvenile programs. As a result of this conference, Michigan has held two 1-day statewide training sessions and has identified community members who are committed to improving the quality of life for girls.

Conclusion

Since its grassroots beginning in 1993, the National Girls' Caucus has continued to thrive. The caucus is currently made up of a broad coalition of individuals from across the Nation. Membership is open to all individuals who are concerned about the welfare of girls and young women. More than 450 individuals and agencies are actively involved representing States from Florida to California. The mailing list has expanded to nearly 2,000 individuals.

A solid foundation has been built to achieve the mission of focusing national attention on the unique needs of girls and young women who are at risk or in the justice system. Much remains to be done. The caucus is committed to expanding its efforts by:

- Developing a legislative agenda that specifically addresses policy and funding concerns for girls who are at risk or who are involved in the justice system.
- Increasing public awareness efforts on the national, State, and local levels.
- Providing technical assistance as it relates to gender-specific programming.
- Increasing membership and collaboration efforts.
- Sharing successful State and local program ideas and initiatives.
- Hosting the third national conference—"Girls: Priority 1"—in the fall of 2000.

The challenge is clear. Caucus members must continue to translate their experience and commitment into action. Creating change requires action at the

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national, State, local, and individual levels. Through continued collaboration, the caucus will ensure that the voices of girls in the justice system are heard. The cost of failure is enormous. The futures of girls are at stake.

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The Juvenile Rights Advocacy Project: Representing Girls in Context

by Francine T. Sherman

> If you could tell lawyers one thing, what would it be?
>
> *Represent the client and not just the case.*
>
> *[Lawyers] should listen to what you have to say so they know what you need . . . listen to you not only about your case but also what you have to say to keep in mind what you want to do for yourself . . . for your sanity . . . get to know you.*[1]

Girls arrive in the juvenile justice system often through paths marked by sexual and physical abuse, mental illness, substance abuse, family disconnection, and special education. They are disproportionately involved in the juvenile justice system as status offenders (e.g., runaways), are exploited as prostitutes, and often violate terms of probation and parole. To make sense of these complex and multisystem pathways, legal representation must be flexible, contextual, and consistent over time.

Since the winter of 1996, the Juvenile Rights Advocacy Project (JRAP), an interdisciplinary clinical program at Boston College Law School, has been formulating case strategies based on an understanding of the lives of delinquent girls and the pathways they take through the juvenile justice system. This approach has resulted in expanded resources for JRAP, greater system accountability, and fewer status offenders escalating into the delinquency system.

JRAP begins its representation when a girl enters the juvenile justice system and continues until the girl becomes an adult. Cases are referred by detention centers, parents, lawyers, and JRAP clients. Cases are chosen, in part, for their multisystem involvement. Supervised law students, collaborating with students in counseling psychology or social work, provide disposition and postdisposition representation, handle special education cases, and address the client's civil legal needs. The JRAP model uses legal strategies to access mental health, public health, and child welfare resources and represents female clients in subsequent delinquency or criminal proceedings.

In *A Call for Justice*,[2] the disposition and postdisposition stages of the delinquency process were identified as critical areas for representation. Given high caseloads, inadequate resources, and the crucial nature of the adjudicatory process, however, defense lawyers are often unable to continue representation much beyond adjudication. *A Call for Justice* recommends that juvenile defenders have the flexibility to represent clients in related collateral matters and the time to develop meaningful attorney-client relationships.

Even in a State such as Massachusetts, in which youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems are consistently appointed counsel, there is inadequate continuity of representation. One focus group conducted by JRAP revealed that two-thirds of the participating girls, who were appointed their first attorney when they were 14 years old or younger, had an average of four attorneys each before the age of 16. Girls with histories of abuse, running away from foster and residential placements, and a series of delinquency offenses and probation violations might be represented by several lawyers within a short time. Although some lawyers might represent a girl simultaneously on different matters, each tends to see his or her role as court-based and limited to the particular case at hand.

The JRAP model of continuous representation allows lawyer and client to plan long- and short-term legal strategies together. Law students map the client's history through the juvenile justice system in an effort to proactively examine available resources, rights, and legal strategies. Girls with extensive system histories can benefit enormously from this ongoing approach. For example, JRAP lawyers and law students might represent one young woman in postdisposition motions,

treatment meetings with child welfare and juvenile justice agencies, appeals to obtain special education services, a child protective case concerning her child, an evaluation of a personal injury case, and minor adult criminal charges. Through representation that moves in and out of court, into negotiations with service providers and probation officials, and through administrative processes, JRAP lawyers collaborate with clients and model self-advocacy for teenage girls.

As the number of girls in the juvenile justice system increases, this contextual model resists the impulse to simplify and compartmentalize delinquency among girls. Focusing on the client, the pathway she takes into delinquency, and the full range of her legal needs humanizes delinquency so that the lawyer truly represents the client, and not just the case.

For Further Information

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[1] These quotations are from a focus group conducted by the Juvenile Rights Advocacy Project with girls in a Massachusetts detention center. The focus group was designed to explore the girls' perspectives on quality legal representation.

[2] Juvenile Justice Center, 1995, *A Call for Justice: An Assessment of Access to Counsel and Quality of Representation in Delinquency Proceedings*, Washington, DC: American Bar Association, Juvenile Justice Center.

OJJDP Programs and Training and Technical Assistance Resources

Gender-Specific Programming for Female Juvenile Offenders

Using an FY 1995 competitive OJJDP grant, Cook County, IL, has built a network of support for juvenile female offenders. The county has developed gender-specific assessments of needs, strengths, and risks for juvenile offenders; provided training in implementing gender-appropriate programming; and designed a pilot program with a community-based continuum of care and a unique case management system.

In FY 1998, OJJDP provided continuation funding to the Cook County gender-specific program and began funding the State of Connecticut to develop specialized programs for girls from prevention to detention. Connecticut's objectives and activities also include: (1) planning, implementing, and demonstrating a program that will develop a hierarchy of sanctions with specific emphasis on girls up to age 18 and (2) incorporating systemic changes. The Connecticut program focuses primarily on the needs of pregnant girls and adolescent mothers.

Technical assistance is provided to both Cook County and Connecticut by Greene, Peters, and Associates, OJJDP's gender-specific training and technical assistance grantee. The project is being implemented, in partnership with the Bureau of Justice Assistance, by the grantees, the Cook County Bureau of Public Safety and Judicial Coordination and Connecticut's Office of Alternative Sanctions. For more information, contact:

Rena Goldwasser, Court Planner
Office of Alternative Sanctions
2275 Silas Deane Highway
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
860–563–7424
860–721–9474 (fax)
or
Mary Kehoe-Griffin, Chief Coordinator
Cook County Bureau of Public Safety and Judicial Coordination
69 West Washington Street
Suite 2630
Chicago, IL 60602
312–603–1160

Gender-Specific Training and Technical Assistance

In 1996, OJJDP entered into a 3-year cooperative agreement with Greene, Peters, and Associates to stimulate, expand, and strengthen the development and implementation of gender-specific programming

for at-risk female adolescents and female juvenile offenders. The goals of this project are to:

- Identify program models or best practices.
- Conduct a national needs assessment.
- Develop a technical assistance package.
- Adopt and enhance policies and practices in youth-serving agencies that reflect gender-specific programming.
- Develop a curriculum for program line staff.
- Develop a training-of-trainers curriculum.
- Implement a national public education initiative focused on the need for this programming.

For more information, contact:

Sharon D. Peters
Greene, Peters, and Associates
1018 16th Avenue North
Nashville, TN 37208
615–327–0329
615–327–1422 (fax)
greenpet@worldnet.att.net

National Training and Technical Assistance Center

OJJDP's National Training and Technical Assistance Center announces the *1998–1999 Training and Technical Assistance Resource Catalog*. The catalog includes 49 organizations that provide training and technical assistance under OJJDP grants and contracts. Updated on an annual basis, the catalog is a tool to further the collaboration and coordination of the efforts of these organizations.

The center seeks to make these organizations and other related resources more available to State and local agencies. To that end, the center will:

- Conduct an ongoing assessment of the training and technical assistance needs of elected officials, practitioners, and citizen advocates.
- Match capabilities of providers with the training and technical assistance needs of State and local communities and provide onsite and telephone technical assistance.
- Prepare jurisdictional team training and technical assistance packages for use by States and local communities.
- Develop resource briefs and other useful materials for OJJDP grantees and contractors, practitioners, and citizen advocates.

The center also operates a resource database and clearinghouse and assists in providing training and technical assistance to State and local agencies. To support these efforts, the center:

- Collects and organizes OJJDP training and technical assistance resources and products.
- Coordinates a training and technical assistance network of leading planners, practitioners, and scholars to assist State and local agencies.
- Disseminates information and sponsors workshops, seminars, and conferences for elected officials, practitioners, and citizen advocates.

For more information on OJJDP training and technical assistance initiatives, to request a copy of the catalog, or for information on conferences and training, call the center at 800–830–4031.

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OJJDP's Teleconference Videotape Targets Gender Issues

What About Girls? Females and the Juvenile Justice System is the latest addition to OJJDP's satellite teleconference videotape series. The series is an efficient means of training staff in juvenile justice organizations, law enforcement, youth-serving agencies, schools, and other community organizations.

What About Girls provides a forum for issues concerning female offenders in the juvenile justice system, examines various approaches and promising program models for girls, and identifies resource material that supports gender-specific programming. The May 24, 1999, teleconference broadcast highlighted the PACE Center for Girls, Inc. Jacksonville, FL; an initiative of the Pulaski County Juvenile Court, Little Rock, AR; and the Harriet Tubman Residential Center, Auburn, NY. Teleconference speakers included Dr. Joanne Belknap, Associate Professor in Sociology and Women's Studies, University of Colorado; Inez Nieves-Evans, Director of the Harriet Tubman Residential Center for girls in upstate New York; and the Honorable Rita Gruber, Little Rock, AR.

To learn about future teleconferences and to coordinate a downlink site in your community, contact Becky Ritchey of OJJDP's Juvenile Justice Telecommunications Assistance Project at 606–622–6671 or via e-mail at beckytrc@iclub.org. To order a copy of the videotape, see the order form.

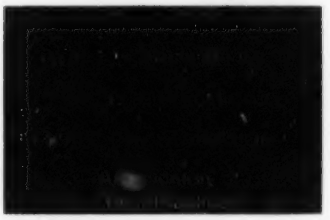
Juvenile Female Offenders: A Status of the States

An OJJDP Report released in October 1998, *Juvenile Female Offenders: A Status of the States*, describes State efforts to develop and implement programs and policies for at-risk girls and juvenile female offenders. The strategies presented in this Report include developing gender-specific programs for girls, providing training for personnel who work with adolescent females, and focusing on preventing delinquent behavior in girls through the establishment of front-end, community-based services.

Efforts to address the needs of juvenile females in this country are evolving and changing with the times. Although States are increasingly demonstrating a strong commitment to this issue, more work is necessary if we are to reduce delinquency among America's fastest growing juvenile offender population. This Report is both a resource for understanding current initiatives and a guide to assist the field in identifying future courses of action. It is available online at www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/pubs/gender/.

Guiding Principles for Promising Female Programming: An Inventory of Best Practices

Another OJJDP Report, *Guiding Principles for Promising Female Programming: An Inventory of Best Practices*, provides a comprehensive review of the most relevant theoretical and research studies on the gender-specific needs of adolescent girls. It delineates the risk and protective factors affecting girls and presents strategies both in the juvenile justice system and in community settings. The Report is available online at ojjdp.ncjrs.org/pubs/principles/contents.html.

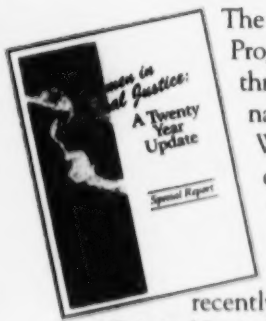


Other Resources

OJJDP's Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, through the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS), is the repository for tens of thousands of criminal and juvenile justice publications and resources from around the world, including those focusing on gender-specific issues. They are abstracted and made available through a database, which is searchable online (www.ncjrs.org/database.htm). We encourage you to share your resources on gender-specific issues and other juvenile justice and delinquency prevention topics for inclusion in the database. Send materials to:

Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, Acquisitions–2B, 2277 Research Boulevard, Rockville, MD 20850

Women in Criminal Justice: A Twenty Year Update



The Office of Justice Programs (OJP), through its Coordination Group on Women and in collaboration with other U.S. Department of Justice agencies, recently released *Women in Criminal Justice: A Twenty Year Update*. This report is an update of *The Report of the LEAA* [Law Enforcement Assistance Administration] *Task Force on Women*, published in October 1975, which made recommendations on issues that the criminal justice field should examine to ensure that women and girls are treated fairly in the criminal justice system. *Women in Criminal Justice* evaluates these recommendations and provides statistics, research, and other data focusing on females as adult and juvenile offenders, victims of crime, and professionals working in the criminal justice system. It also includes a series of recommendations for action by policymakers. The report is available online at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/Reports/98Guides/wcjs98/.

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A New Look and a New Location

OJJDP's Web site has a new look, a new location, and new information.

Visit www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org, and tell us what you think; send feedback to askncjrs@ncjrs.org.

Sections of the new Web site include:

- **About OJJDP.** Learn about OJJDP—how the agency is organized, what legislation authorized its formation, and how to contact staff members.
- **Juvenile Justice Facts and Figures.** Get the latest facts and figures on juvenile justice, delinquency prevention, and violence and victimization.
- **Highlights.** Discover the latest funding opportunities, new features of the Web site, and new sources of information.
- **Grants and Funding.** Explore funding opportunities from OJJDP and other agencies.
- **Resources.** Share and build on the experiences of individuals, agencies, and organizations in your community.
- **Programs.** Learn about the design and implementation of OJJDP programs.
- **Publications.** Access youth-focused publications and other resources.
- **Calendar of Events.** Visit our calendar for upcoming OJJDP-sponsored and other youth-focused conferences.

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- ❑ **NEW** *What About Girls? Females and the Juvenile Justice System* (Video, VHS format). NCJ 176365. $17 (U.S.), $21 (Canada and other countries).

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Publications From OJJDP

OJJDP produces a variety of publications—Fact Sheets, Bulletins, Summaries, Reports, and the *Juvenile Justice* journal—along with videotapes, including broadcasts from the juvenile justice telecommunications initiative. Through OJJDP's Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse (JJC), these publications and other resources are as close as your phone, fax, computer, or mailbox.

Phone:

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In addition, JJC, through the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS), is the repository for tens of thousands of criminal and juvenile justice publications and resources from around the world. They are abstracted and placed in a database, which is searchable online (www.ncjrs.org/database.htm). You are also welcome to submit materials to JJC for inclusion in the database.

The following list highlights popular and recently published OJJDP documents and videotapes, grouped by topical areas.

The OJJDP Publications List (BC000115) offers a complete list of OJJDP publications and is also available online.

In addition, the OJJDP Fact Sheet Flier (LT000333) offers a complete list of OJJDP Fact Sheets and is available online.

OJJDP also sponsors a teleconference initiative, and a flier (LT116) offers a complete list of videos available from these broadcasts.

Corrections and Detention

Beyond the Walls: Improving Conditions of Confinement for Youth in Custody. 1998, NCJ 164727 (116 pp.).

Disproportionate Minority Confinement: 1997 Update. 1998, NCJ 170606 (12 pp.).

Disproportionate Minority Confinement: Lessons Learned From Five States. 1998, NCJ 173420 (12 pp.).

Juvenile Arrests 1997. 1999, NCJ 173938 (12 pp.).

Reintegration, Supervised Release, and Intensive Aftercare. 1999, NCJ 175715 (24 pp.).

Courts

Innovative Approaches to Juvenile Indigent Defense. 1998, NCJ 171151 (8 pp.).

Juvenile Court Statistics 1996. 1999, NCJ 168963 (113 pp.).

Offenders in Juvenile Court, 1996. 1999, NCJ 175719 (12 pp.).

RESTTA National Directory of Restitution and Community Service Programs. 1998, NCJ 166365 (500 pp.), $33.50.

Trying Juveniles as Adults in Criminal Court: An Anaylsis of State Transfer Provisions. 1998, NCJ 172836 (112 pp.).

Youth Courts: A National Movement Teleconference (Video). 1998, NCJ 171149 (120 min.), $17.

Delinquency Prevention

1998 Report to Congress: Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP). 1999, NCJ 173424 (65 pp.).

1998 Report to Congress: Title V Incentive Grants for Local Delinquency Prevention Programs. 1999, NCJ 176342 (58 pp.).

Combating Violence and Delinquency: The National Juvenile Justice Action Plan (Report). 1996, NCJ 157106 (200 pp.).

Combating Violence and Delinquency: The National Juvenile Justice Action Plan (Summary). 1996, NCJ 157105 (36 pp.).

Effective Family Strengthening Interventions. 1998, NCJ 171121 (16 pp.).

Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grants Strategic Planning Guide. 1999, NCJ 172846 (62 pp.).

Parents Anonymous: Strengthening America's Families. 1999, NCJ 171120 (12 pp.).

Prenatal and Early Childhood Nurse Home Visitation. 1998, NCJ 172875 (8 pp.).

Treatment Foster Care. 1999, NCJ 173421 (12 pp.).

Gangs

1996 National Youth Gang Survey. 1999, NCJ 173964 (96 pp.).

Gang Members on the Move. 1998, NCJ 171153 (12 pp.).

Youth Gangs: An Overview. 1998, NCJ 167249 (20 pp.).

The Youth Gangs, Drugs, and Violence Connection. 1999, NCJ 171152 (12 pp.).

Youth Gangs in America Teleconference (Video). 1997, NCJ 164937 (120 min.), $17.

General Juvenile Justice

Comprehensive Juvenile Justice in State Legislatures Teleconference (Video). 1998, NCJ 169593 (120 min.), $17.

Guidelines for the Screening of Persons Working With Children, the Elderly, and Individuals With Disabilities in Need of Support. 1998, NCJ 167248 (52 pp.).

Juvenile Justice, Volume V, Number 1. 1998, NCJ 170025 (32 pp.).

A Juvenile Justice System for the 21st Century. 1998, NCJ 169726 (8 pp.).

Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report. 1999, NCJ 178257 (232 pp.).

OJJDP Research: Making a Difference for Juveniles. 1999, NCJ 177602 (52 pp.).

Promising Strategies To Reduce Gun Violence. 1999, NCJ 173950 (253 pp.).

Sharing Information: A Guide to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and Participation in Juvenile Justice Programs. 1997, NCJ 163705 (52 pp.).

Missing and Exploited Children

Portable Guides to Investigating Child Abuse (13-title series).

Protecting Children Online Teleconference (Video). 1998, NCJ 170023 (120 min.), $17.

When Your Child Is Missing: A Family Survival Guide. 1998, NCJ 170022 (96 pp.).

Substance Abuse

The Coach's Playbook Against Drugs. 1998, NCJ 173393 (20 pp.).

Drug Identification and Testing in the Juvenile Justice System. 1998, NCJ 167889 (92 pp.).

Preparing for the Drug Free Years. 1999, NCJ 173408 (12 pp.).

Violence and Victimization

Combating Fear and Restoring Safety in Schools. 1998, NCJ 167888 (16 pp.).

Guide for Implementing the Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders. 1995, NCJ 153681 (255 pp.).

Report to Congress on Juvenile Violence Research. 1999, NCJ 176976 (44 pp.).

Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders. 1998, NCJ 170027 (8 pp.).

Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders: Risk Factors and Successful Interventions Teleconference (Video). 1998, NCJ 171286 (120 min.), $17.

State Legislative Responses to Violent Juvenile Crime: 1996–97 Update. 1998, NCJ 172835 (16 pp.).

White House Conference on School Safety: Causes and Prevention of Youth Violence Teleconference (Video). 1998, NCJ 173399 (240 min.), $17.

Youth in Action

Community Cleanup. 1999, NCJ 171690 (6 pp.).

Cross-Age Teaching. 1999, NCJ 171688 (8 pp.).

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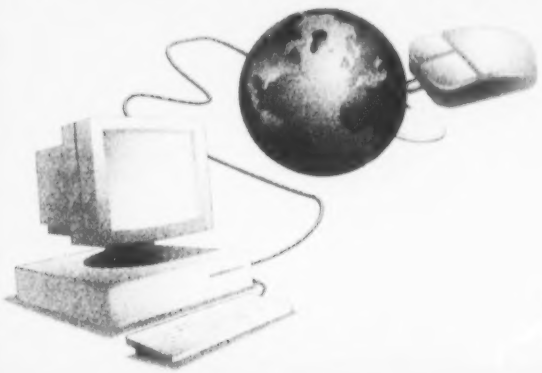

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